



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Media Contact**

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## **Drought Update**

**SALT LAKE CITY** (July 15, 2022) – Over the past couple of months, the state has seen a climate split between the north and south. We are seeing more of a northwest to southeast split as the monsoon season settles in. The northwest portion of the state is trending towards higher temperatures compared to the rest of the state. According to the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#), 83.03% of the state is in extreme drought or worse.

“Utah is playing the precipitation lottery, with monsoons hitting some areas of the state harder than others,” said Joel Williams, deputy director of the Utah Division of Water Resources. “If the trend we’ve seen during the first half of the year continues, 2022 will go down as the third-driest on record. We are hoping for better cooperation from Mother Nature but taking action to become more drought-resilient and stretch the water supply.”

### **At-a-glance highlights:**

- On July 3, the level of Great Salt Lake dropped below the October 2021 historic low elevation. This average daily surface elevation, 4190.1, was measured at USGS [station 10010000](#), located on the southern end of the lake and is associated with a data record dating back to 1847. View press release [here](#).
- Last week, the state saw increased wildfire risk due to dry and windy conditions. These conditions resulted in five major fires that burned over the weekend. To date, those fires have burned almost 17,000 acres of land, and three of them are still active this week.
- The Division of Drinking Water is working with the town of Stockton to assess and address damage caused by the Jacob City Fire to the community's drinking water treatment plant. The town is currently using an emergency well for drinking water until facility repairs or upgrades are completed.



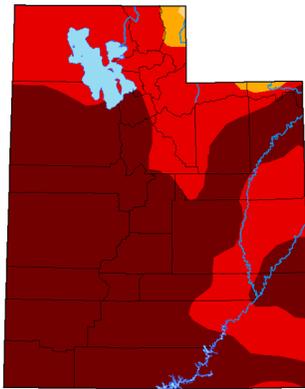
- High temperatures and drought conditions have caused an increase in the number of harmful algal blooms (HABs) throughout the state over the past week. Visitors are advised to check [habs.utah.gov](https://habs.utah.gov) for current conditions and report suspicious algae.
- Recreators should check reservoir levels before they head out. Conditions vary, and some [boat ramp closures](#) are in place due to low water levels.
- Eighteen of Utah’s largest 45 reservoirs are below 55% of available capacity. Overall statewide storage is 57% of capacity. This is about where reservoirs were this time last year
- Surface water rights in Utah are limited by the available natural flow in the river system. As conditions get drier, the flow diminishes, and fewer water rights can be satisfied. Because Utah water law follows the prior appropriation doctrine, older (senior) water rights have preference—or “priority”—over younger (junior) water rights..
- Last year, Jordanelle Reservoir only rose 21,650 acre-feet. This year over three times that amount reached the reservoir. Reservoir levels are still low due to years of drought, but we appreciate that more water made it to the reservoirs.
- Of the 99 measured streams, 57 are flowing below normal. **Five streams are flowing at record low conditions.** Streamflows are lower than normal due to low snowpack.
- According to the latest information released by the U.S. Drought Monitor, drought conditions continue to plague the state, with 83.03% of the state experiencing “Extreme” or “exceptional” drought conditions. Extreme and exceptional drought conditions are the Drought Monitor’s most serious categories.
- Residents looking for tips on how to help reduce water consumption can be found at [SlowtheFlow.Org](https://SlowtheFlow.Org).

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## FULL REPORT

U.S. Drought Monitor  
Utah

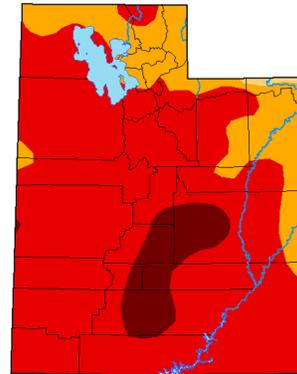
July 13, 2021



2021

U.S. Drought Monitor  
Utah

July 12, 2022  
(Released Thursday, Jul. 14, 2022)  
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



2022

*Intensity:*

- None
- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Moderate Drought
- D2 Severe Drought
- D3 Extreme Drought
- D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

*Author:*

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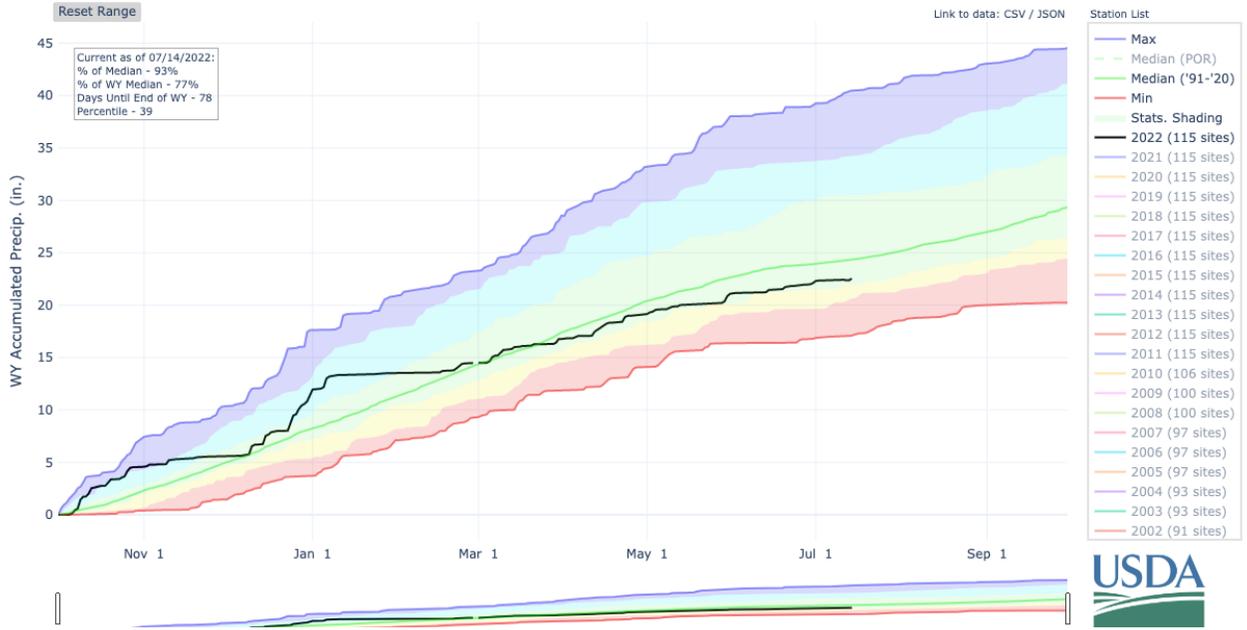


Graphic compares Utah's current drought situation to 2021. Exceptional drought (the worst category) covers 7.76% of the state. Last year at this time 65.41% was in exceptional drought.

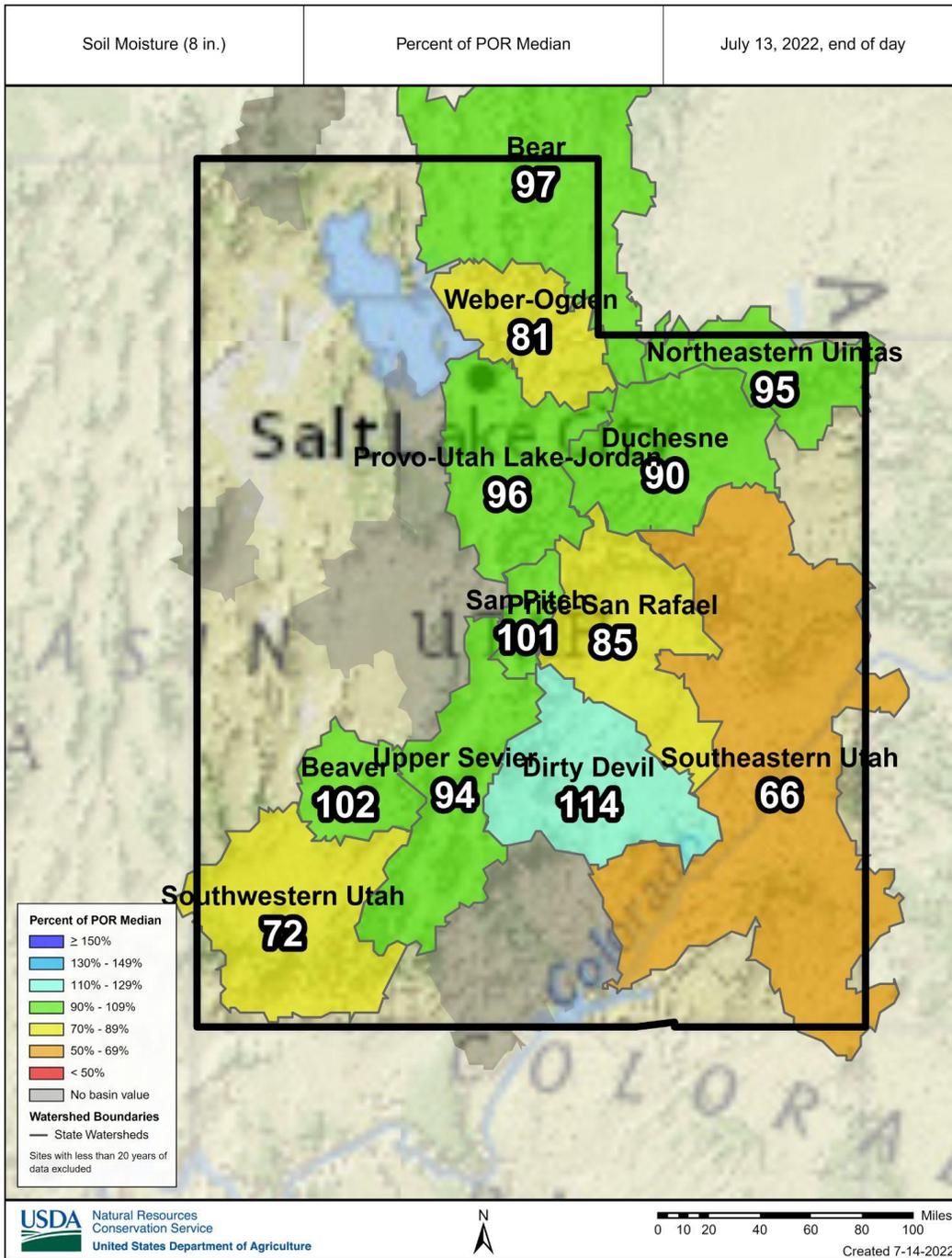
### **Precipitation and soil moisture**

- Soil moisture is decaying faster than usual this water year, which could mean increased fire danger this summer.
- Soil moisture is normal for this time of year statewide. Different portions of the state, such as the Uintahs, are doing better than others.
- Spring runoff is nearly over, causing streamflow levels to decline. Snowpack was 25% below average, and runoff was not enough to refill our reservoirs. Reservoirs are not expected to significantly increase until next spring.

PRECIPITATION IN STATE OF UTAH



*Total Precipitation is below typical for this time of year. Precipitation statewide has been lower than normal since late April.*



Soil moisture based on regions; some areas are in a better situation than others.

### **Temperature and Evaporation**

- Temperatures over the last two weeks were above average over nearly all of the state. Around the Great Salt Lake, temperatures were significantly higher than average.
- Evaporation was slightly less than typical in most areas of the state. Two areas in the northwest and southeast part of the state did have higher evapotranspiration. Evapotranspiration is essentially how thirsty the air is for water.

## **Streamflows**

- Fifty-seven of Utah's 99 streams reporting data are flowing below normal.
- Due to low snowpack, streamflows are flowing lower than normal. This means our reservoirs won't fill as they normally would.
- Five streams had their seven-day average flow reach record low.
- Daily flow from 28 headwater streams is flowing below the median for this time of year. Early snowmelt brought headwater streamflow up significantly. Streamflow is declining, signaling that the snowpack is mostly melted.

## **Reservoir and Lake Levels**

- Reservoir storage statewide continues to drop and now averages 57%. Eighteen of Utah's 45 reservoirs are below 55% of available capacity.
- Current statewide reservoir levels are about where they were last year at this time (55%) and lower than the median for this time of year (75%). There are about two months remaining in the irrigation season when water use is traditionally at its peak.
- This year, reservoir storage started quite a bit lower than last year. With current reservoir storage close to last year's percentage, this means much more water made it to our streams and reservoirs.
- On July 3, the level of Great Salt Lake dropped below the October 2021 historic low elevation. This average daily surface elevation, 4190.1, was measured at USGS [station 10010000](#), located on the southern end of the lake and is associated with a data record dating back to 1847. View press release [here](#).
- The Sevier Basin is currently at 13% of capacity. Last year the basin was at 17% of capacity. Sevier County and nearby areas have been in significant drought almost without relief since 2012.

## **Department of Environmental Quality**

- The Division of Drinking Water is working with the town of Stockton to assess and address damage caused by the Jacob City Fire to the community's drinking water treatment plant. The town is currently using an emergency well for drinking water until facility repairs or upgrades are completed.
- High temperatures and drought conditions have caused an increase in the number of harmful algal blooms (HABs) throughout the state over the past week. Visitors are advised to check [habs.utah.gov](https://habs.utah.gov) for current conditions and report suspicious algae.
- Do not swim, water ski, or drink the water, clean fish well and discard guts, and keep animals away from the following water bodies:
  - Warning Advisories
    - Baker Reservoir, Mantua Reservoir, East Canyon Reservoir, Scofield Reservoir, Lincoln Marina and Provo Bay at Utah Lake, the North Fork of the Virgin River (including the Narrows)
  - Health Watch
    - Otter Creek Reservoir, La Verkin Creek (Zion National Park)

## **Wildfire Risks**

- Last week, the state saw increased wildfire risk due to dry and windy conditions. These conditions resulted in five major fires that burned over the weekend. To date, those fires have burned almost 17,000 acres of land, and three of them are still active this week.
- In all, Utah has seen 476 wildfires, with 305 deemed human-caused. Over 23,000 acres have been burned this year by wildfires.
- The northwestern part of the state is at a higher risk for wildfires due to the dry fuels and lightning that comes along with summer thunderstorms. These conditions make the area prone to larger wildfires.
- Fuels remain critically dry across the state, and those fuels, coupled with windy weather, are driving a lot of our fire activity.

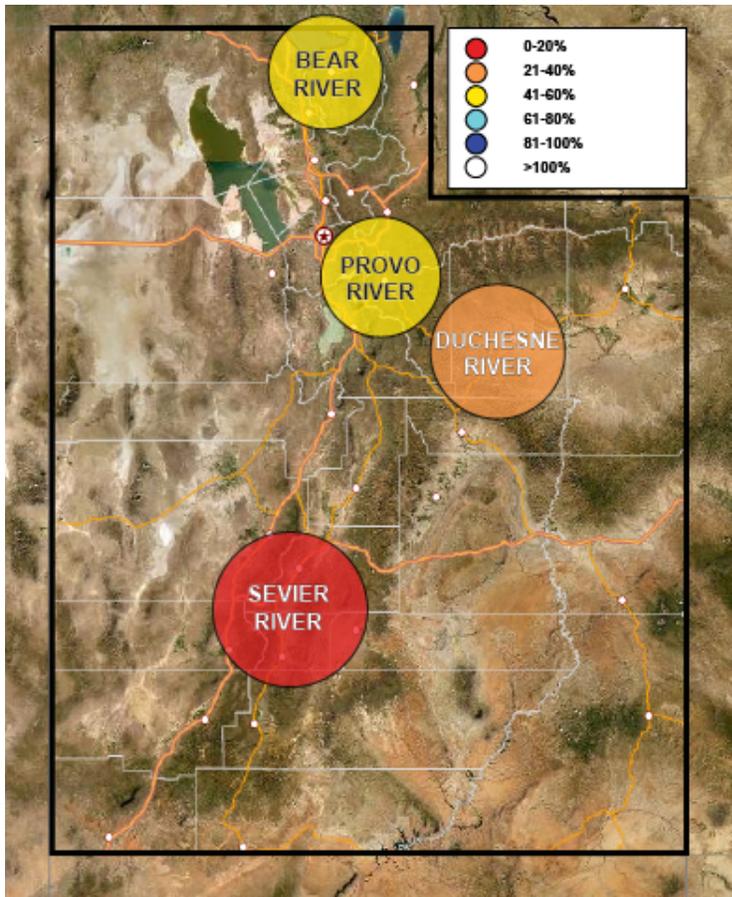
## **Water Rights**

### **Overview of the State of Surface Water Rights**

Surface water rights in Utah are limited by the available natural flow in the river system. As conditions get drier, the flow diminishes, and fewer water rights can be satisfied. Because Utah water law follows the prior appropriation doctrine, older (senior) water rights have preference—or “priority”—over younger (junior) water rights.

The four systems identified below (i.e., Bear River, Duchesne River, Provo River, and Sevier River) are a good representation of the various river systems throughout the state. The percentages shown in the table are based on the total amount of water rights. For example, 41% of the water rights on the Bear River system are currently being satisfied. River Commissioners oversee these systems to ensure water is being diverted by those entitled to receive it according to their priority dates.

Since the water supply varies each year, we have provided data for the current year with data from the same day for the previous three. For example, last year at this time, only 18% of the water rights on the Bear River system were being satisfied. In 2020, however, 112% of rights were being satisfied. When a system shows a number greater than 100%, it means that all water rights on the system are being satisfied, and additional water is being stored in reservoirs.

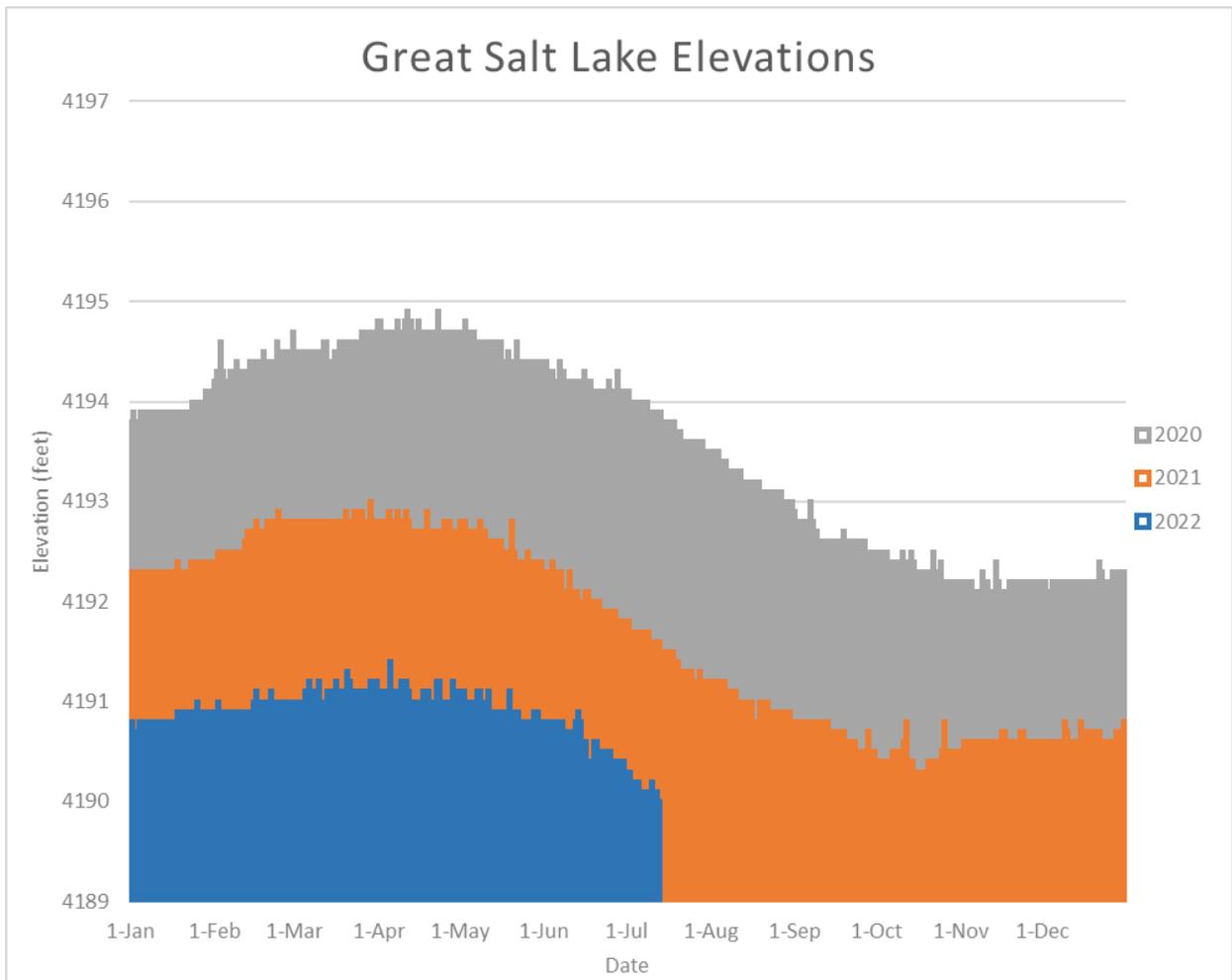


Bear River	Rights Satisfied	Stream Flow
2022	41%	580 cfs
2021	18%	266 cfs
2020	112%	1,589 cfs
2019	140%	1,975 cfs

Provo River	Rights Satisfied	Stream Flow
2022	20%	91 cfs
2021	13%	61 cfs
2020	20%	91 cfs
2019	66%	300 cfs

Duchesne River	Rights Satisfied	Stream Flow
2022	34%	363 cfs
2021	15%	163 cfs
2020	37%	395 cfs
2019	206%	2,210 cfs

Sevier River	Rights Satisfied	Stream Flow
2022	13%	52 cfs
2021	20%	80 cfs
2020	10%	41 cfs
2019	101%	407 cfs

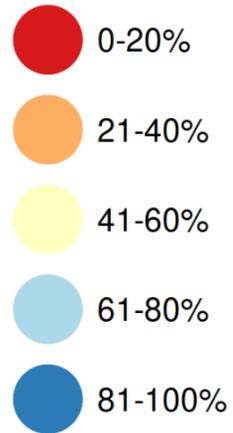
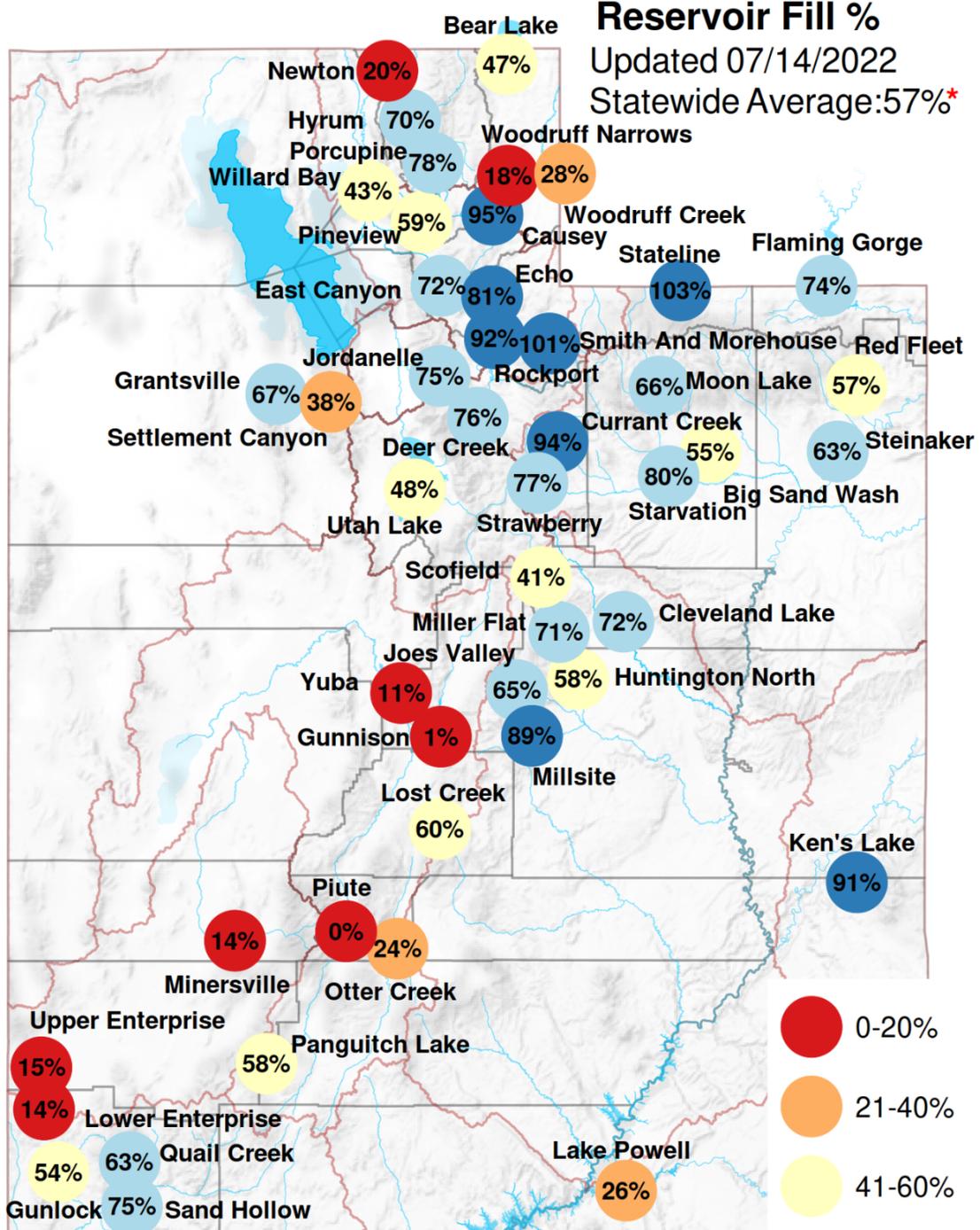


*The graph compares elevations of Great Salt Lake for the last three years.*

# Reservoir Fill %

Updated 07/14/2022

Statewide Average: 57%\*



Data Sources: [water.utah.gov/reservoirlevels](http://water.utah.gov/reservoirlevels)

\*State average excludes Lake Powell & Flaming Gorge to better represent the state's water supply.

Total capacity including these is 44%

